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Παρατηρήσεις στον γλυπτό διάακοσμο και το τέμπλο του καθολικού της Αγίας Μονής Αρειας Ναυπλίου

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Several fragments of architectural sculptures are preserved in the monastery of Hagia Moni in Areia, Nauplion. Some of them have particularly elaborate relief or champlevé decoration, pertaining to the 12th century. Among them are noted the fragments of three small piers and a cornice, attributed to the marble altarscreen of the church. Based on these, a reconstruction of the templon is attempted. Unfortunately the evidence is not complete, but the surviving fragments give a vivid image of the sculptural work that used to decorate this significant monument.

Keywords
Middle-Byzantine period; 12th century; sculpture; templon; altarscreen; iconostasis; Merbaka; Chonika; Argolis; Agia Moni in Areia, Nauplion.

The katholikon of Hagia Moni in Areia, Nauplion is one of the most striking 12th-century monuments, a large church of the complex cross-in-square type, with a narthex and exonarthex, its façades formed by meticulous cloisonné masonry with bricks carved to form thin straight lines, and adorned with elegantly arranged ceramic decorations, carved with precision. The church was erected, according to the marble inscription embedded in its west façade, in 1149 by Leon, Bishop of Argos¹.

¹ The term “Αργείων” fits the dodecasyllable of Leon, and perhaps alludes to ancient texts studied by Constantinopolitan scholars. The fact that only Argos and not Nauplion is mentioned is no paradox, and not just due to poetic license. Nauplion was incorporated in the Bishopric of Argos. Whether Nauplion was ever added to the title officially or unofficially in the Byzantine period, and in what order, or whether it was added by later copiers of Middle-Byzantine sources, is a question addressed by historians. The title including both cities appears in the Hypomnema of Leon (1144) and some Brachea Chronika (Short Chronicles) shortly afterwards (1165, 1189), preserved in later manuscripts, but also...
The inscription is metrical, and its scholarly language and the good carving of letters and relief demonstrate the special education of the founder (Fig. 1). On the upper left corner it has a relief cross flanked by pomegranate trees, under a ciborium which rests on scrolls carved in the champlevé technique. The motif is elegant and similar in style, execution and repertoire to the rest in the 1174 donor inscription of the Panagia at the castle of Argos, see Βυζαντινό Μουσείο Αργολίδας. Κατάλογος Μόνιμης Έκθεσης, eds D. Athanasoulis – A. Vasilikiou, Athens 2016, inv no. ΑΡΓ 1928/A.2, cat. no. and fig. 104 p. 103. The matter is however of no implication to the essence of the history of the monastery: whatever the official title, Nauplion was definitely under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Bishop and later the Metropolitan of Argos during the 12th century (V. Konti, “Το Ναύπλιο και οι σχέσεις του με την επισκοπή ή Άργους και τη μέση βυζαντινή περίοδο”, Byzantina Symmeikta 15 (2002), 131-148).

Among the fragments are some that undoubtedly belong to the katholikon marble door frames (Fig. 3), bearing decoration of winding scrolls forming heart-shaped palmettes, a typical 12th-century pattern. The style of the carving and the scale of their decoration are similar...
to that of the sculptures preserved in situ, but also to the slab incorporated into the north porch (see below Fig. 7). By contrast, the reliefs on some other fragments employ a completely different scale and their carving is not reminiscent of the refined technique used in the members securely attributed to the katholikon⁶, or are preserved too fragmentarily⁷. Therefore, their identification is problematic and they will not be examined.

Three fragments of templon posts with integrated octagonal colonnettes attract interest. They present brilliant craftsmanship and belong to the same sculptural composition. From the point of view of the motifs, the scale of the decoration and the quality of craftsmanship, they match the church’s sculpture mentioned above, although they have champlevé decoration, which may be seemingly different⁸ as the relief is necessarily lower.

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⁶ Choras, op. cit. (n. 2), pls. 11h, 12δ, 12ε, 13ε.
⁷ This is the case for two fragments depicting foliage of a bird (ibid, pl. 12a), which could indeed belong to a 12th-century altar-screen panel, but they are too small to allow for a secure representation of the panel’s original form and dimensions.
⁸ The technique and perhaps quality difference of these members may indicate the work of a different craftsman, but definitely not a different date from the church’s architectural sculptures. The
Fig. 4. Nauplion, Areia. Hagia Moni. Katholikon, fragment of a templon post (front and side view).

Fig. 4a. Drawing of the fragment and reconstruction of a templon post.
and the bands of the motifs are flat. However, the mix of techniques, a characteristic of the 12th century is also found on the inscription. Two of these templon posts⁹ have equal width, 14 cm. They both have champlevé decoration on their upper part.

The first, which used to have an integral jamb and is hence attributed to the bema door, is decorated with more skilled craftsmen in the same workshop or even a different workshop could have been chosen for the altarscreen, but the style and taste of all sculptures is that of an integral group, typical of the mid-12th century.

⁹ Ibid., pls 11γ, 12β. The latter was referred to by Choras as part of a panel, but this is justified, given that his study does not focus on the sculpture.
a cross formed by an interlacing band (Figs 4, 4a). Discernible right below the cross is the edge of a palmette, just above the lower broken end of the member.

The second post (Figs 5, 5a), which does not have a doorjamb and is therefore attributed to a side support, is decorated on its upper part with a cross, formed by a guilloche, characterized by the correct geometric tracing of the circles of which it is formed. Unfortunately, only the base of the cross is preserved, knotted to the external frame of the motif. On the left of the cross we distinguish the letter N, from the usual abbreviation IC XC N K. Underneath is a champlevé palmette, identical to the one which is barely discernible on the previous member. Below the palmette the templon post is decorated with vertical frames. On the back side, the octagonal section of the overlying colonnette is continued. There is no doubt that both fragments belong to the altarscreen.

The third templon post10 (Figs 6, 6a) has the same

10 Bouras - Boura, op.cit. (n. 2), fig. 73.
arrangement of forms and motifs, with homologous frames on its front face and a champlevé foliate cross above them, and the same style of carving. The centers of helices of the vegetal decoration are accentuated with a drill, as are the centers of the semicircular ends of the cross arms. The use of the drill has also been used to help the tracing and to accentuate the geometry of the helices of scrolls and the centers of circles on the previous templon posts, as well as the door frames, the cornice and the panel that will be presented below. This characteristic is a sign of the sophisticated yet discreet mannerisms which are distinctive of the 12th century, as are the shallow lines forming an X at the intersection of the cross arms (also present at the marble slab embedded in the north porch, described below). The pier has a door jamb on its side and an integral octagonal colonnette on the upper part, but is narrower than the two previous fragments (11 cm). It can therefore be attributed to the prothesis or the diaconikon. Two fragments of octagonal colonnettes can also be attributed to the altarscreen supports.

Two fragments of relief slabs were incorporated into the later chapel of Saint Charalampos\(^{11}\) and the north porch of the katholikon\(^{12}\) respectively.

The first, a panel with integral cornice, differs in style and scale from the rest of the sculptures attributed to the katholikon, and is rather narrow for its altar screen, so it belonged to another building (maybe the chapel itself). The second panel (Figs 7, 7a) was embedded in the north porch of the katholikon during a much later repair, at which time the northeast corner of the porch was completely replaced, as can be ascertained by the masonry of the east façade of the porch. The upper part of its main façade was also rearranged, as is made clear by the interruption of the impeccable thin line of bricks outlining the arch: this line of bricks has been interrupted and roughly patched using thicker bricks under the marble slab in question and the triangular stone on its left. This slab had been attributed by Ch. and L. Bouras to the katholikon screen with a question mark\(^{13}\), which will probably continue to remain unanswered. Its decoration comprises small rectangles formed by tripartite bands, knotted to each other and to an external frame. Each rectangle is decorated by relief patterns; the surviving ones are vegetal scrolls and a cross formed by an interlacing band (similar —although here the band is tripartite— to the cross on the bema post, and even with small palmettes filling the corners on both pieces). The arrangement with knotted rectangles is common in the 12th century, and the style of the carving resembles the sculptures of the church (the foliate cross of the inscription and the mullion imposts), as well as the decoration of the marble frames of the Katholikon doors; it therefore appears that it was indeed part of the original decoration of the monument. The interlacing band cross on the bema post is similar, albeit composed of a single band because of its smaller size and champlevé technique, but it can be noted that even the small palmettes filling the corners of the rectangle on the panel, existed with a similar arrangement at the cross of the bema post, unfortunately very damaged at the corners. However, after the removal of the panel from the wall during recent works, the slab appears to be rather thick (13 cm) in relation to the templon posts, and it is carved on a different type of marble. Templon panels of considerable thickness are not rare\(^{14}\) and the ready availability of marble for re-use could justify its divergence from the required thickness and the different material, so its provenance from the altarscreen cannot be excluded, but with reservation. Its backside is roughly carved with the point. On the other hand, the piece does not portray the usual themes and arrangement found on pseudo-sarcophagi plaques, such as the one which would have blocked the front side of the arcosolium of the narthex.

Finally, during the restoration works, a fragment of a particularly elaborate chamfered cornice was detected (Figs 8, 8a). It bears continuous relief decoration of alternating winding scrolls that form palmettes, related in style and carving technique to the rest of the architectural sculptures of the church. Its bottom side is not smooth, but rather seems to have been resting on an underlying member. Its size, profile and decoration also indicate that it could be a cornice placed above

\(^{11}\) Ibid, 39–40.
\(^{12}\) Choras, op.cit. (n. 2), pl. 160, Bouras – Boura, op.cit. (n. 2), fig. 744.
\(^{13}\) Bouras – Boura, op.cit. (n. 2), 74.
\(^{14}\) I thank M. Kappas for this observation.
Fig. 7. Nauplion, Areia. Hagia Moni. Katholikon, the fragment of a slab incorporated into the north porch.

Fig. 7a. Drawing of the fragment of a slab.
the architrave of the altarscreen. It is also made of the same marble with greyish veins as the templon posts. It is possible, based on the size of the supports, that the architrave and its cornice may have been rather heavy, executed in two-level technique or some other mixed technique, as is the case in other altarscreens of the 12th century (Amfissa\(^{15}\), Samarina\(^{16}\)). The cornice could also have initially stood above the west door frame of the church\(^{17}\), but it is made of a different type of marble, similar to that of the templon posts, and particularly elaborate.

Based on all the above, a graphic representation of the church’s altarscreen was attempted (Figs 9, 10).

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16 Bouras – Boura, op.cit. (n. 2), 295.
17 I thank Dr. G. Tsekes and the paper reviewers for this observation.
unfortunately without evidence for the capitals and architraves, or certainty about the panels' decoration. With the proposed position of the supports, the panels at the bema would be 55-57 cm wide, and the doors approximately 65-70 cm wide, whereas. Traces on the stylobate or the side walls have been destroyed by later interventions.

As is common in Middle Byzantine sculpture the material is in secondary use. The use of recycled marble is also attested by the inscription, whose corners were obviously broken from the start: the upper right corner of the frame around the text is curved and lowered, contrary to the other three, in order to fit within the shape of the damaged marble. Similarly, the width of the frame is reduced skillfully in order to avoid its interruption at the lower left corner, making use of the design of the relief ciborium. The broken corners of the inscription have been used as evidence of its provenance from an older building, in order to uphold a chronology in discord to the one mentioned. However, it is clear that this hypothesis does not withstand scrutiny. It must also be pointed out that there is no discrepancy either.

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18 The displacement of the line of the frame at this point may be due to the slanted base of the ciborium, but it may also be using this feature in order to adjust to the broken shape inconspicuously.
20 A. Louvi-Kiri, “Modes de construction occidentaux dans le Péloponnèse après la conquête franque”, S. Brodbeck – A. Nikolaides
between the date of the inscription (1149) and that of the *Hypomnema* of Leon (1143)\textsuperscript{21}, as the latter refers to the foundation of the monastery ("φροντιστήριον")\textsuperscript{22}. The *Hypomnema* has reached us in a 16th-century copy [Konti, op.cit. (n. 1)], so the inscription is actually more reliable, and the style of letters and decoration confirm it. Moreover, the spelling error at the month of the inscription does not mean that the inscription is not genuine; Leon would have given the poem to the sculptor, relying on him or the abbot to add the date once construction was complete [Bouras – Boura, op.cit. (n. 2), 85 note 3]. From the palaeographic point of view, there is no doubt as to the carving of the inscription in 1149 [Rhoby, op.cit. (n. 2), 310].

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\textsuperscript{23} Rhoby, op.cit. (n. 2), 311.
\textsuperscript{24} Louvi-Kizi, op.cit. (n. 18), 352.
\textsuperscript{25} Perhaps in order to add more light to the exonarthex, which was separated by walls from the narthex, as has recently been revealed and published by D. Athanasiou ["Σημείωμα για την αρχολογική βελτίωση της ιστορικής αρχιτεκτονικής του Εκκλησίου της Καλλικράτειας Μεσσαρίων", Βυζαντινό Μουσείο Αργολίδας, op.cit. (n. 1), 91].
\textsuperscript{26} Sanders, op.cit. (n. 17).
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., 70, fig. 27.
The interlacing band cross, found on the slab (Fig. 7) as well as the post (Fig. 4), slightly different in its execution (giving the impression more of basket-weave), appears on an architrave from the collection of Hosios Loukas, dated to the 12th century. An interlacing band cross is found on the cabochon of the temple architrave of the neighbouring church of Saint John Ekeamon at Lignourio. A parallel is also found on a slab at Saint John the Fore-runner at Argos, somewhat more archaic. By contrast, the crosses found in the Andromonastiro sculptures are carved in more vivid relief, have harder outlines, and seem posterior.

The pomegranate tree on the mullion impost (Fig. 2c) is very similar to the one that appears on the donor’s inscription. The heart-shaped palmettes of the door frames (Fig. 3) are similarly arranged to those on the temple posts of the church of the Savior at Amfissa and a temple post from Hosios Loukas. The champlevé palmette on the parabamata post (Fig. 6) is slightly reminiscent of the ones on the architrave from Dryalos (1103/4), which is much more archaic in style. Finally, the use of mixed techniques, characteristic of the 12th century, is also found on a panel with two peacocks from Nauplion, but the execution is not similar to that at Hagia Moni.

The three posts are characterized by elegant design and skilful carving. Their Middle Byzantine date is obvious because of their typology, size and carving technique. The accuracy of the design and the geometric clarity of the vertical frames conveys a classicizing mood and reproduces Early-Christian forms, a trend characteristic of the 12th century. The same pattern with homologous frames appears on the temple posts of the altarscreen of Hosios Loukas, where it has also been attributed to an intentional turn towards ancient paradigms. Similar examples, can be found in the sphere of influence of the Capital at Edirne (Adrianople) - in secondary use in the Beyazid II mosque, dated to the Dark Ages (in which case we could consider this a survival rather than revival); in the 9th and 10th-century Lower City church at Amorion; at the bema door jambs of the marble altarscreen of Vatopedi monastery; at the Nea Moni on Chios; in the Helladic area, we can mention the church by the sea-wall of Monemvasia and the Asomatos at Kakovouno, both very simplistic in their profile and execution, compared to the equivalent work at Hagia Moni. Here, we do not have just an isolated element, following a trend of the time or the mere resonance of features introduced by Hosios Loukas. As in Hosios Loukas, it is part of the entire concept of the monument, which presents “classical” Byzantine style, elegance, quality of construction and most probably some Constantinopolitan influence, albeit in a manner typical of the so-called Helladic school. Indeed, in the Hagia Moni katholikon, nothing attests to provincial taste. This becomes apparent in the architecture of the

20 C. Bouras, ‘Η ιερουτεχνία της Μονής του Όσιου Λουκά, Athens 2015, 75.
21 Y. Ötügen – R. Ousterhout, “Notes on the monuments of Turkish Thrace”, Anatolian Studies 39 (1989), 125-128, pl. 27. I thank Dr. G. Pallis for bringing this article to my attention.
22 E. Ivison, “Middle-Byzantine sculptors at work: evidence from the lower city church at Amorion”, La sculpture byzantine. VIIe-XIIe siècles. Actes du colloque international organisé par la 2e Éparchie des antiquités byzantines et l’École française d’Athènes (BCH Suppl. 49), eds C. Pennas - C. Vanderheijde, fig. 16.
23 T. Pazaras, “Το μορφότομο τέμπλο του καθολικού της Μονής Βατοπεδίου”, DChAE 18 (1995), 16, fig. 2.
24 C. Bouras, Nea Moni on Chios; History and Architecture, Athens 1982, 124, figs 128, 130.
25 R. Etteoglou, “Μια τέχνη αναδρομική στην Κάτω πόλη της Μονής Βατοπεδίου”, La sculpture byzantine. VIIe-XIIe siècles, op.cit, n. 40, figs 1, 5, 7-9.
26 N. Drazalakis, “Εγκυροτυπία τέμπλου στην Κάτω πόλη της Μονής Βατοπεδίου”, La sculpture byzantine. VIIe-XIIe siècles, op.cit, n. 36, figs 1, 5, 7-9.
27 N. Drazalakis, op.cit. (n. 36), 64-65, figs 99, 100, 106.
28 Not in the sense of a direct loan of means of construction or crews of workers, but in the choices of a formal character and urban taste, practised within local experience and expediency.
29 The fact that the church matches the quality of Constantinopolitan parallels has been noticed by D. Athanasoulis ("Some Notes
church: its complex cross-in-square type, the conchs in the side walls of the bema, a feature found in the Katholikon of Hosios Loukas, the monuments imitating its plan and a few other monuments in the Helladic area, whereas it is common in Constantinople; the high quality imported ceramic bowls. These elements must be attributed to choices made by the founder, who is known to have belonged to the aristocratic Constantinopolitan Antzas family, and to have been educated in the intellectual environment of the capital, a fact reflected in his texts and the inscription itself. It seems that he kept contact with the capital even later, as he participated in the local Council of Constantinople in 1157.

A “classicism” of Middle-Byzantine taste has been observed in pictorial arts, in the sense of a turn to ancient models for inspiration. The same can be said for the opus sectile floors, which were re-flourishing in Middle-Byzantine times throughout the empire, including Southern Greece, where they had been forgotten during the so-called Dark Ages. A similar trend in sculpture, which can be seen at Hagia Moni, has also been remarked in the re-appearance of perforated sculptures in the 12th century, or the two-level technique with protruding elements, such as acanthus leaves, where the artist exhibits his dexterity and alludes to Early Christian forms.

A comparison to the more than a century later neighboring church at Merbaka, also a work of the highest intentions reflecting the personality of its own classical founder, is particularly revealing of the regression of marble sculpture in the Peloponnese during the 13th century, which has been observed by D. Athanasoulis. Although the church built by the Latin Bishop de Moerbeke is a conscious copy of the churches of Leon, the “facsimile” of a Byzantine church that Sanders suggests was intended for ideological and semantic purposes, the divergence of elements that inevitably express on every building its own time is evident, such as the general style, eclectic and decorative at Merbaka, as opposed to the classical and austere style of Hagia Moni, the interpretation of particular decorative features, and the

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52 C. Bouras, “Διάτυπη μοιρήματα μεσοβυζαντινής γλυπτικής στην Ελλάδα”, La sculpture byzantine. VIIe-XIIe siècles, op.cit. (n. 40), 473-475.
53 Sanders, op.cit. (n. 17).
54 Athanasoulis, op.cit. (n. 22), 99.
55 Struck, op.cit. (n. 2), 234-236. Sanders, op.cit. (n. 17).
56 In particular, the church of Merbaka follows the plan of the Dormition on Chonika, which is identical to the Katholikon of Hagia Moni in terms of style and quality of construction, therefore it could very well be the katholikon of the second monastery built by Leon almost simultaneously according to the sources. [Chouzas, op.cit. (n. 2), 55-56]. For the obliterated Byzantine toponym mentioned in the sources see: V. Konti, “Ἀργεῖον Ἰερά Μονή”, Symmecika 9 (1994), 259-261.
57 The insightful observation by Sanders [op.cit. (n. 17)] is fortified by the fact that the church of the Latin Bishop is not simply following the Byzantine tradition or just any church, but of a specific one, much appreciated in the area.
59 As is often the case in a copy, the artist tends to overemphasize specific elements of his model; at the same time he fails to achieve
methods of construction. Sculptural decoration can be added to these differences. The few parts that have been preserved from the altarscreen of the Merbaka church are of a totally different character: a. one marble capital with extremely unsophisticated vegetal decoration, similarly to the window mullion impost; b. porous stone icon frames with capitals of Gothic morphology, perhaps similar to those of the dome which are adorned with crockets; c. ribs forming the window frames with decoration of schematized oak leaves, typical of 13th-century Gothic morphology and entirely different from the chamfered cornices surrounding the arches of the windows at Hagia Moni; d. the sole door that does not have a ribbed frame of Gothic style, inherent to the masonry, makes use of a fluted column, instead of a properly shaped marble frame, as those of Areia.

In conclusion, the existing fragments of the Hagia Moni altarscreen demonstrate that this was an outstanding composition, on a par with the first-class architecture of the church it adorned. The study of the altarscreen sculpture confirms the inference already expressed by Ch. Bouras that “we stand in front of one of those rare cases of Byzantine church building, where we can observe in a direct way how the personality of the founder influenced the quality of the architectural work.” And of course this coincided with a time of excellence and maturity of the art and craftsmanship in Greece.

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Illustration credits
Photos and drawings by Christina Pinatsi.
Χριστίνα Πινάτση

ΠΑΡΑΤΗΡΗΣΕΙΣ ΣΤΟΝ ΓΛΥΠΤΟ ΔΙΑΚΟΣΜΟ ΚΑΙ ΤΟ ΤΕΜΠΛΟ ΤΟΥ ΚΑΘΟΛΙΚΟΥ ΤΗΣ ΑΓΙΑΣ ΜΟΝΗΣ ΑΡΕΙΑΣ ΝΑΥΠΛΙΟΥ

Το καθολικό της Αγίας Μονής στην Άρεια, κοντά στο Ναύπλιο, είναι κτισμένο, σύμφωνα με μαρμάρινη κτητορική επιγραφή στη δυτική του οψή, το έτος 1149 από τον επίσκοπο Άργους Λέοντα. Η έμμετρη με λόγιο ύφος επιγραφή υποδεικνύει την ιδιαίτερη μόρφωση του κτήτορα (Εικ. 1). Στην άνω αριστερή γωνία της φέρει ανάγλυφο σταυρό, περιστοιχισμένο από ροδιές, μέσα σε κιβώτιο λαξευμένο με κομψότητα. Η αμφισβήτηση της αρχικής τοποθέτησης της επιγραφής στη θέση αυτή από τον G. Sanders δεν επιβεβαίωνε, καθώς το πλαίσιό της προσαρμόζεται στην άνω δεξιά γωνία στο σχήμα του θραυσμένου μαρμάρου σε δεύτερη χρήση, γεγονός που επιβεβαίωνε τη λάξευση της επιγραφής στο ήδη θραυσμένο μάρμαρο. Επίσης, η διαφορά των έξι περίπου χρόνων από την ημερομηνία του Υπομνήματος με αυτή της επιγραφής δεν αποτελεί ασυνέπεια, καθώς το Υπόμνημα αναφέρεται στην ίδρυση της Μονής («φροντιστήριον»), και είναι λογικό η ολοκλήρωση της ανέγερσης του καθολικού να έπεται κατά κάποια έτη. Το ανάγλυφο της επιγραφής είναι παρόμοιο σε τεχνοτροπία και θεματολογία με τα επιθήματα των αμφικιονίσκων των παραθυρών. Τα υπόλοιπα στοιχεία του αρχικού μαρμάρινου διακόσμου του ναού (τέμπλο, θυρώματα, δάπεδο) δεν διατηρούνται στη θέση τους. Ωστόσο, σώζονται δισπαρά ή εντοιχισμένα θραύσματα αρχιτεκτονικών γλυπτών, από παλιά γνωστά στη βιβλιογραφία, αφού φωτογραφίες τους έχουν δημοσιευθεί από τον π. Γ. Χώρα στη μονογραφία του για το μοναστήρι. Στην πιο πρόσφατη μελέτη των Χ. και Λ. Μπούρα για τον 12ο αιώνα, επίσης παρουσιάζονται και αναγνωρίζονται ορθότερα μερικά από τα γλυπτά.

Με την ευκαιρία της μελέτης αποκατάστασης του μνημείου δόθηκε η δυνατότητα αναλυτικής αποτύπωσης και εκ νέου παρατήρηση των γλυπτών. Το έργο αποκατάστασης που πραγματοποιήθηκε από την αρμοδία Εφορεία Αρχαιοτήτων, συνεισέφερε νέες πληροφορίες. Ευχαριστώ όλους τους συναδέλφους και τους προϊσταμένους των αρμοδίων υπηρεσιών για την άριστη συνεργασία.
απαντούν στη σφαίρα επιρροής της πρωτεύουσας, στους σταθμούς των βημαθέων του μαρμάρινου τέμπλου του καθολικού της Μονής Βατοπεδίου καθώς και στη Νέα Μονή Χίου. Στον ελλαδικό χώρο μπορούν να αναφερθούν ευάριστα παραδείγματα, πολύ επωλώτικης εκτέλεσης. Στην Αγία Μονή, ωστόσο, δεν πρόκειται απλώς για ένα μεμονωμένο στοιχείο του δια κόσμου που ακολουθεί μια τάση της εποχής ή τα πρότυπα που εισήγαγε ο Όσιος Λουκά. Όπως και στον Όσιο Λουκά, εντάσσεται στο σύνολο του σχεδιασμού του μνημείου, που παρουσιάζει κλασικό ύφος, θρησκευτική αυστηρότητα, ποιότητα στην κατασκευή και πιθανότατα άμεσες επιρροές από την πρωτεύουσα, καθώς στο καθολικό της Αγίας Μονής τίποτε δεν μαρτυρεί επαρχιακό γούστο. Αυτό καθίσταται εμφανές και στην αρχιτεκτονική του ναού, και κυρίως στον τύπο, στη διαμόρφωση αβαθών κογχών στους πλευρικούς τοίχους του ιερού βήματος, κάτι που εμφανίζεται και στον Όσιο Λουκά, στα μνημεία που τον αντιγράφουν και σε ευάριστα άλλα μνημεία του ελλαδικού χώρου, ενώ συνηθίζεται στην Κωνσταντινούπολη, στην ανατολική ποιότητα εστίασης πινάκων χ.ο.χ. Τα στοιχεία αυτά δεν μπορούν παρά να αποδοθούν σε επιλογές του κτήτορα, ο οποίος γνωρίζουμε ότι προερχόταν από την αριστοκρατική οικογένεια Αντζά της Κωνσταντινούπολης, στο πνευματικό περιβάλλον της οποίας είχε λάβει τη μόρφωσή του, γεγονός που αντικατοπτρίζεται στα σωζόμενα κείμενα του κτήτορα και στην επιγραφή, όπως είδαμε προηγουμένως. Σχέσεις με την πρωτεύουσα, άλλωστε, φαίνεται ότι διατηρούσε και μετέπειτα, αφού συμμετείχε στην ενδημική Σύνοδο του 1157. Το θραύσμα θωρακίου που εντοιχίσθηκε κατά τη διάρκεια μεταγενέστερης επισκευής στο βόρειο πρόπυλο, έχει αποδοθεί με επιφύλαξη στο αρχικό τέμπλο του ναού (Εικ. 7). Ο διάκοσμος θυμίζει τα επιθήματα αμφικιονίσκων και τα θυρώματα, και φαίνεται ότι ανήκει στο ίδιο συνόλο. Ωστόσο, πρέπει να τηρηθούν επιφυλάξεις για την ταύτισή του.

Τέλος, κατά της απολήξεως, εντοπίζονται ένα επίμηκος θησαυρός λοξότμητου κοσμήματος με συνεχή διάκοσμο διπλού ελισσόμενου βλαστού που σχηματίζει ανθέμια, τεχνοτροπικά συγγενείς με τα λοιπά εισηγμένα πινάκια του ναού (Εικ. 8). Πιθανότατα προέρχεται από κοσμήματα πάνω από το επιστύλιο του τέμπλου. Με βάση τα παραπάνω, έγινε προσπάθεια αναπαράστασης του τέμπλου του ναού, δυστυχώς χωρίς τα κιονόκρατα και το επιστύλιο, ούτε βεβαιώτα για τον διάκοσμο των θωρακίων (Εικ. 9, 10). Αρχιτέκτων, MA
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